The following is Delia Caban's story. She is one of HCLE's more recent volunteers and gets much of the credit for the improved design of the wiki. She, too, was involved in learning and computers, but from within an office.

Delia Caban's Story

My name is Delia Caban. I'm working full time as a secretary for a Special Education Program. I love reading, gardening and researching for new projects. I love to challenge myself to learn and to discover how things works. I live in Puerto Rico.

I had an introduction to the computer's world while finishing my degree at Interamerican University, and immediately fell in love with them. I worked with word processors. At that time if you made a command you had to press shift + F1 or F2, or + F5. For example: shift + F5 meant ask for the directory. When I started working, the company only had typewriters and my coworkers had never had contact with a computer. There was just one computer. I don't remember the brand, but I do remember that the software was Wordperfect. I created many letters and tables in the new format to be use in the office.

It was in one corner of the office and everybody was scared to even touch it. Having a little experience with it, I immediately started to use it for letters and tables. Initially everybody was telling me that I was going to break it, but when they saw how easy it was to correct mistakes, to build tables, and to add colors and patterns to the paper they began to ask many questions, still without touching the computer. One by one, they started to fall in love with the computer.

We worked for the Department of Education and many times we had to do reports related to the schools, employees and students.

One by one they asked me to teach them. It was crazy!!! First it was easy because teaching one person at the time was easy, but then everybody stated to gather around and the office turn up side down!! The supervisor put me in charge of teaching all the employees (about ten). I had to do my job and help the others to learn how to use the computer at the same time. Every five seconds somebody called me because they made mistakes or because the computer showed a message. (The messages were in English but everybody was better at Spanish.) Believe me, it wasn't easy; but I survived, and the best of all was that they learned.

The next year, the boss bought computers for all and the systems in the office changed dramatically. Everybody started to discover new functions and shared their discoveries with each other. We grew up together.

This happened by September 1993. There were only desktop computers and he decided to buy a more advanced model. He called many companies and they gave him a lot of advice about better systems for us. We didn't know much about computers so we basically asked for a computer with a word processor. We learned by ourself mostly.

Once the computers began to be introduced to schools (about 6 years later) the Central Office decided to give training, including the teachers. (Later they received a laptop, but that is another story.)

In the Department of Education, even now, most of the jobs do not have a prerequisite of knowing how to use a computer; but if you don't, you are going to have a very hard time doing the job. Mostly all the jobs are related to computers. We communicate through the computers and it is through the computer that we send information, reports and keep update the information of students and employees.

Delia's story is illustrative of the informal nature of the interplay between computers and learning. The comment, "Initially everybody was telling me that I was going to break it", is evidence of the fears people can develop around new things. Her reaction, which was to try anyway, is evidence of how individuals arise to lead others into and through change.

What's your story?